

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

GABRIELLE D'ADAMO SINGER, STAFF DIRECTOR
DAVID M. WEINBERG, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

September 5, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Vice President:

I write with concern that, at President Trump's "suggestion," you decided to stay at the Trump International Golf Links & Hotel in the village of Doonbeg during your official visit to Ireland. I am alarmed that you elected to spend taxpayer dollars for travel and lodging at President Trump's privately-owned property – located on the other side of the country, more than 180 miles away from your meetings with government officials in Dublin.¹ This raises serious concerns about wasteful expenditures and possible conflicts of interest related to taxpayer-funded travel by this Administration.

On September 3, you reportedly met with Ireland's President, Michael D. Higgins, and Prime Minister Leo Varadkar in Dublin. Rather than stay in Dublin, you instead spent the first two nights of your trip at President Trump's golf club in Doonbeg. This involved not only the cost of lodging for yourself, your aides, and a protective service detail, but also considerable travel costs, including four hours in transit via motorcade and aboard Air Force Two in each direction. Citing security and logistical concerns, you and your Chief of Staff have made the claim that staying at President Trump's resort in Doonbeg was necessary.² I find it hard to believe that your office was unable to identify lodgings that could accommodate the security and logistical needs of your trip in the capital of Ireland, which houses among other locations the United States Embassy – where President Reagan stayed during his 1984 visit.³

¹ Maggie Haberman and Eric Lipton, *'Business as Normal': Pence's Stay at Trump Hotel in Ireland Follows a Trend*, New York Times (Sept. 3, 2019) (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/03/us/politics/trump-pence-ireland.html>).

² John Wagner, Robert Costa, and David Fahrenthold, *Trump Encouraged Pence to stay at his golf resort in Ireland*, Washington Post (September 3, 2019) (https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-encouraged-pence-to-stay-at-his-golf-resort-in-ireland/2019/09/03/a2dc63c4-ce3f-11e9-b29b-a528dc82154a_story.html).

³ R.W. Apple Jr., *Irish in Anti-Reagan Mood for Visit*, New York Times (June 1, 1984) (<https://www.nytimes.com/1984/06/01/world/irish-in-an-anti-reagan-mood-for-visit.html>).

I am even more troubled by the apparent conflict of interest in your decision to stay at a property owned by President Trump, which creates the risk that taxpayer funds are being used to directly profit the President. As a public servant, you have an obligation to avoid even the perception of a conflict of interest. In response to media inquiries, your office has since stated that the trip to Doonbeg was made in your personal capacity to visit family.⁴ Federal policies regarding official travel by government employees, including you, are organized around a single principle: public service is a privilege and taxpayer dollars spent on travel should be used prudently. In 2017, then Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Mick Mulvaney issued guidance regarding travel aboard government aircraft, emphasizing specifically that “beyond the law and formal policy, departments and agencies should recognize that we are public servants ... Put another way, just because something is legal doesn’t make it right.”⁵

Unfortunately, your travel to President Trump’s golf club is part of a troubling trend. Reports now claim that at least 24 of the 32 individuals who have served in the President’s Cabinet have patronized Trump properties, including the Trump International Hotel in Washington, DC – another property owned by the President.⁶ President Trump still owns the Trump Organization via a trust and, under the terms of the trust, can draw income from his business at any time.⁷

In order to better understand your decision to stay at the Trump International Golf Links & Hotel while on official travel and the total cost of this trip to American taxpayers, I respectfully request your response to the following questions as soon as possible and no later than October 1, 2019:

1. Please provide the total cost to taxpayers of your travel to Ireland, broken out by expense category (lodging, air travel, ground travel, per diems, and other expenses), for you, your personal guests, your security detail, any government officials or employees, or others. Please also provide any underlying documentation – including travel vouchers – for this trip.
2. The Trump Organization has previously stated that it only charges the U.S. government “at cost and [does] not profit from” stays by government officials at properties owned by President Trump.⁸ In a public statement, your Chief of Staff, Marc Short, also stated that the government negotiated room rates with the Trump International Golf Links & Hotel.⁹

⁴ *Washington Post*, *supra* note 2.

⁵ Memorandum from Mick Mulvaney, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, to the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, Travel on Government-Owned, Rented, Leased, or Chartered Aircraft (M-17-32) (September 29, 2017).

⁶ *New York Times*, *supra* note 1.

⁷ Derek Kravitz and Al Shaw, *Trump Lawyer Confirms President Can Pull Money From His Businesses Whenever He Wants*, Pro Publica (April 4, 2017) (<https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-pull-money-his-businesses-when-ever-he-wants-without-telling-us>).

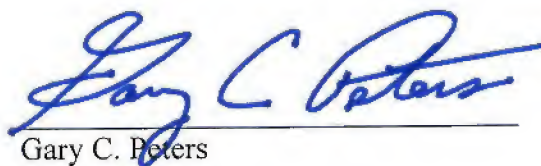
⁸ David Fahrenthold and Drew Harwell, *Report: Trump’s stay at his Scotland resort cost \$68,800*, Washington Post (July 17, 2018) (https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/report-trumps-stay-at-his-scotland-resort-cost-68800/2018/07/17/4fce3e28-89ee-11e8-8aca-86e88ae760d8_story.html).

⁹ *Washington Post*, *supra* note 2.

- a. Please provide all government expenses at the Trump International Golf Links & Hotel, including any ultimately reimbursed by you.
 - b. Please provide the room cost for you, your security detail, and all government officials traveling with you.
 - c. Please provide comparable room costs from nearby hotels in Doonbeg and hotels in Dublin during this time period.
 - d. Please indicate whether a government rate was provided during your stay at the Trump International Golf Links & Hotel.
 - e. Please indicate whether your office was charged "at cost" by Trump International Golf Links & Hotel and, if so, how this has been confirmed by your office.
3. After media inquiries, your Chief of Staff stated that you are personally paying for travel expenses attributed to your family members, who are traveling with you in Ireland.¹⁰ Please provide information on all expenditures by the government pertaining to travel by your family during your trip to Ireland, the amount of any reimbursement you are providing, and the date(s) of such reimbursement(s).
4. Please state whether any analysis was conducted to compare the full costs of travel – including lodging, security, and other travel costs – for staying in Doonbeg instead of Dublin during your official visit to Ireland. If so, please provide this analysis and any underlying documentation.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Gary C. Peters", written over a horizontal line.

Gary C. Peters
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs

¹⁰ *New York Times*, *supra* note 1.